12-2016

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Published in Cultural Sociology, 2016, 10 (4), 448-465.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975515590243

Accepted version

The Cultural Pragmatics of Political Apology

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Abstract

In recent decades, research on 'political apology', wherein the state apologizes to victims of its past wrongs, has multiplied, as redress movements based on human rights have proliferated around the world. Since most of this research has been conducted by political philosophers, however, analyses of political apologies tend to adopt formal and normative perspectives. To propose an alternative, empirically-grounded approach, in this paper, I develop the 'cultural pragmatics' of political apology. To this end, I first conceptualize political apology as a social performance aimed to 're-fuse' an impaired relationship between the perpetrator state and the victim individual. This conceptual move enables systematic analysis of political apology in terms of six elements constitutive of social performance: collective representations, actors, audience, means of symbolic production, mise-en-scène, and power. To elaborate this model of the cultural pragmatics of political apology, I then examine the protracted dispute over wartime atrocities that Japan committed against South Korea.

Keywords

cultural pragmatics, performance, Alexander, East Asia, Japan, Korea, comfort women, historical injustice, international relations, apology, political apology

Since the 1990s, instances of 'political apology', wherein the state apologizes to victims of its past wrong, have multiplied, as redress movements based on human rights have proliferated around the world (Barkan, 2000; Torpey, 2003; Wolfe, 2014). This institutional change is reflected in the growing amount of academic research on political apologies and their role in reconciliation (Cunningham, 2014; Nobles, 2008; Smith, 2008). Since most of the research has been done by political philosophers, however, analyses of political apologies tend to adopt formal and normative perspectives that abstract

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interactions between the perpetrator and the victim out of their larger socio-political contexts and prescribe a 'checklist' of requirements that successful apologies must fulfill. A growing number of researchers are dissatisfied with this tendency (MacLachlan, 2014; Mihai and Thaler, 2014) and are now calling for a more contextual and empirical approach to understanding the 'reality' of political apologies in the contemporary world.

In this paper, I build on Jeffrey Alexander's 'cultural pragmatics' (2004a) to propose a sociological theory of political apology as an alternative to the formal and normative approaches currently dominant in the field. To begin with, political apology can be usefully conceptualized as a social performance aimed to create mutual understanding and solidarity between the actor and the audience, that is, the perpetrator state tries to 're-fuse' its impaired relationship with the victim individual. This conceptual move enables systematic analysis of political apology in terms of six elements constitutive of social performance: collective representations, actors, audience, means of symbolic production, mise-en-scène, and power. To elaborate the cultural pragmatics of political apology, I then examine the protracted dispute over the past aggression and wartime atrocities that Japan committed against South Korea. The dispute between the two countries not only provides extensive data for illustrating the cultural pragmatics of political apology, but also helps to expand the unit of analysis from domestic politics to international relations.

Apology: From Personal To Political

Apology is a long-established practice in human societies, and one extensively studied by linguists, philosophers, and psychologists. It is a speech act aimed to restore a temporarily strained social relationship between members who belong to the same moral community (Lazare, 2004; Meier, 1998; Ohbuchi et al., 1989). When one party takes an action toward another that violates a shared moral code, the social relationship between the two becomes strained. If the offender acknowledges the wrongful action and promises to rectify it, and if the offended accepts the validity of his or her speech, the two parties will restore their social relationship and reaffirm their shared moral code. In this respect, apology is integral to maintaining norms that regulate interactions among members of a given community.

These studies of apology have focused mostly on *interpersonal* apology pertaining to two individuals in private settings. However, the recent worldwide growth of redress movements based on human rights has increased instances of 'political apology' (Barkan and Karn, 2006; Mihai and Thaler, 2014). Simply put, political apology is a sub-set of what Nicholas Tavuchis (1991: 48) called 'Many to One apology': the state (a collective actor) apologizes to an individual that it victimized through its past action, be it internal colonization, racial discrimination, or military dictatorship. This emerging research, dominated by political philosophers, has so far analyzed political apologies from formal and normative perspectives. Larger political contexts surrounding the past wrong are reduced to speech acts and other micro-interactions between the perpetrator state and the victim individual, and these interactions are evaluated in terms of a list of requirements that the successful political apology must fulfill. Accordingly, the most commonly debated questions are whether a political apology should be emotionally satisfactory to a victim, just like an interpersonal apology (Smith, 2008), whether a political apology

should be reciprocated by forgiveness (Griswold, 2007), and whether a political apology should be accompanied by reparations (Nobles, 2008).

As Mihaela Mihai pointed out, however, these formal and normative approaches end up constructing a 'check-list model' of political apology that is too decontextualized to be analytically useful: 'Clearly, apologies will take different forms in different communities' and their 'success' depends on 'the normative and political resources, that the context provides' (2012: 214). Put another way, the emerging field of research on political apology needs an alternative framework capable of taking into account dynamics and complexities of larger political contexts of perpetrator–victim interactions. Thus, instead of constructing criteria to determine 'the perfect political apology', as Alice MacLachlan argued, the field needs 'a set of questions … [that] assist us in identifying what a particular apology impresses us as outstanding' and 'tools for navigating a world of *imperfect* political apologies' (2014: 27−28, original emphasis). Indeed, since political apologies are far more likely to fail than succeed (Dasse, 2010; Dodds, 2003), it is all the more important to carve out analytical tools for empirically exploring conditions of their failures versus successes.

Political Apology as a Social Performance

To this end, I propose to build on the cultural pragmatics of social performance proposed by Jeffrey Alexander and his colleagues (Alexander et al., 2006). Simply put, cultural pragmatics conceptualizes social interaction as a performance aimed at generating solidarity between actors and audiences, that is, actors' performance succeeds when audiences accept it as authentic, thereby emotionally 're-fusing' actors and audiences as members of the same community. Here, political apology has the structure of social performance because it aims to 're-fuse' the relationship between the perpetrator state and the victim individual that has been temporarily 'de-fused' due to the former's wrongdoing against the latter. I thus argue that cultural pragmatics can be effectively applied to analysis of political apology understood as social performance.

Indeed, cultural pragmatics offers useful conceptual tools for analyzing political apology in terms of six constitutive elements of social performance (Alexander, 2004a: 530−533). The first element is a system of collective representations, a larger cultural context in which a political apology takes place. These collective representations consist of background assumptions and foreground scripts that render an act of political apology intelligible. The second element is an actor (or a set of actors) that performs a political apology, such as a head of the perpetrator state. The actor enacts the script and tries to make his or her performance convincing to the audience − the third element of political apology – consisting of victim individuals and their supporters, among others. The audience accepts the actor's performance as authentic if it is both intelligible according to the system of collective representations and compelling in cognitive and emotional dimensions. For the actor to enact such a convincing performance, however, he or she needs access to the fourth element: means of symbolic production. The actor needs to secure a proper public space for performing a political apology to begin with, and other material resources for enacting the script. Then, these four elements of political apology are put together, sequenced, and choreographed through the fifth element, mise-en-scène, to

produce dramatic effects appropriate for the intended audience. Finally, power relations, the sixth element, permeate the entire performance; for example, which collective representations are dominant, who is authorized to act, whether the audience is able to disrupt the performance, which means of symbolic production are selected, and which version of mis-en-scène is adopted, are all dependent on political struggles.

According to Alexander, social performances more often fail than succeed in contemporary, complex societies where collective representations are heterogeneous, audiences are fragmented, and multiple powers are competing. Specifically, performances are likely to fail 'if any of the elements that compose them are insufficiently realized, or if the relation among these elements is not articulated in a coherent or forceful way' (Alexander, 2004b: 92). Here, I suggest that cultural pragmatics can offer an empirical and contextual approach currently missing from the research on political apology, for it enables researchers to analyze conditions of failures and successes of political apologies by examining mechanisms that facilitate or forestall the realization of each of the six elements and coordination among them.

The History Problem Between Japan and South Korea: A Case of 'Comfort Women'

To explore how cultural pragmatics can be effectively applied to analysis of political apologies, in the remainder of this paper I examine the so-called 'history problem' between Japan and South Korea. The history problem refers to a set of controversies between the two countries over how Japan should commemorate its past wrongdoing (Lind, 2008; Saito and Wang, 2014). These controversies include, to name but a few, Japanese history textbooks, Japanese prime ministers' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine that honors war criminals, and apologies for victims of Japan's wartime atrocities and colonial rule. Given the limited space, the following analysis focuses on the controversy over 'comfort women', arguably the most explosive topic in the history problem. I chose this topic for two reasons. One is that the protracted and intense controversy generated extensive data for examining interactions between the perpetrator state and the victim individual. Another is that this topic pertains to a political apology at the international level, hitherto neglected in the apology-related research across disciplines (Cunningham, 2014). An international political apology involves a larger number of collective representations, actors, and audiences than its domestic counterpart so far examined by political philosophers. It therefore presents a more stringent test for probing the effectiveness of the cultural-pragmatic approach.

Before proceeding to a cultural-pragmatic analysis of the history problem, however, this section introduces a brief history of interactions between Japan and South Korea over a political apology for former 'comfort women', those who provided 'sexual services' to the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War (1931−1945). The Japanese military originally set up 'comfort stations' to prevent Japanese soldiers from raping Chinese women and contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The military entrusted private contractors to recruit 'comfort women' and manage 'comfort stations'. 'Comfort women' were recruited from both Japan and its colonies, such as Korea. Some women

agreed to work at 'comfort stations', whereas others were forced by deception or coercion. After Japan started the war with the Allied Powers in December 1941 and occupied Southeast Asia, the military increased its involvement in recruitment, the methods of which became increasingly coercive. By 1942, about 400 'comfort stations' were set up across Asia. Historians have offered varying estimates of the total number of 'comfort women', ranging from 20,000 to 200,000 (for an overview of this issue, see Yoshimi and Kawata, 1997).

'Comfort women' began to emerge as a diplomatic issue between Japan and South Korea in October 1990 when a total of 37 women's associations submitted a petition to the Japanese government, demanding an apology and compensation. Then, in November, these women's associations proceeded to form the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (Yun, 2003: 280). Given the growing pressure from South Korean and Japanese NGOs, Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) expressed his 'sincere apology (chūshin yori owabi)' for former 'comfort women' who had suffered 'hardships beyond words (hitsuzetsu ni tsukushigatai shinku)' when he met with South Korean President Roh Tae Woo in January 1992.[1] Miyazawa's government also investigated the archives of various ministries and found multiple documents showing government involvement in the selection of private contractors and hygienic inspection of 'comfort stations', among other activities.[2] In light of the discovered documents, Kōno Yōhei, Miyazawa's Chief Cabinet Secretary, issued the so-called 'Kōno Statement' on 4 August 1993. He acknowledged that the government had been involved, directly or indirectly, in the establishment and management of 'comfort stations' and that, in many cases, women were recruited against their will. He then went on to state:

> The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women …[3]

Nonetheless, Miyazawa's government decoupled compensation from apology by insisting that all issues of compensation had been resolved upon the 1965 normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea.

However, when Murayama Tomiichi, Chairman of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), became prime minister in June 1994 by forming a coalition government with the LDP and New Party Sakigake, Murayama and other JSP cabinet members tried to create a fund for a wide variety of victims of Japan's past wrongdoing. In the end, given the political and financial constraints, Murayama and the other JSP cabinet members decided to focus on one group of foreign victims − former 'comfort women' − since this issue had become the center of international controversies in the early 1990s (Ōnuma et al., 1998: Chapter 1). But the JSP met strong opposition from the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs and the majority of LDP members. They insisted that all issues of compensation had been resolved upon normalization of diplomatic relations. Confronted with the strong opposition, the JSP compromised with the LDP and decided to ask Japanese citizens to make actual monetary contributions to be used as 'atonement money (tsugunai

kin)' for former 'comfort women', while holding the government responsible for the expenses associated with managing the fund, such as staff salaries and advertising costs.

The Asian Women's Fund was thus launched on 19 July 1995, and promoters of the fund, including well-known university professors and former Diet members, published a call for monetary contributions from Japanese citizens in major national newspapers on 15 August. As Chief Cabinet Secretary Igarashi Kōzō explained, the purpose of the fund was 'to offer a heartfelt apology for our country's act that inflicted incurable pains on many women and deeply wounded their honor and dignity', and this apology was to be accompanied by atonement money from Japanese citizens, medical and welfare relief from the government, and incorporation of historical facts about 'comfort women' into history education.[4] Within a year, the Asian Women's Fund collected about 400 million yen from the Japanese public. The fund then began negotiations with five governments that officially acknowledged the existence of former 'comfort women' in their countries: the Netherlands, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, and Taiwan. The fund planned to offer two million yen for each former 'comfort woman', as well as different amounts of medical and welfare support according to the living standards of different countries. In addition, members of the fund were to deliver atonement money with a 'letter of apology (owabi no tegami)' signed by the Japanese Prime Minister.

From the very beginning, however, the Asian Women's Fund received heavy criticism from both Japanese and foreign NGOs that supported former 'comfort women'. Criticisms were most intense in South Korea. All prominent women's NGOs in South Korea, including the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, rejected the fund. The Korean Council president Yun Chung Ok criticized the fund as the Japanese government's 'attempt to evade its responsibility for the crime [the comfort-women system] by asking Japanese citizens to contribute donations' (reprinted in Yun, 2003: 144–145). Given the widespread opposition to the fund among South Korean NGOs and politicians, President Kim Young Sam's government did not actively support the fund's activities in South Korea.

In January 1997, representatives of the Asian Women's Fund finally managed to meet with seven anonymous former 'comfort women' in South Korea and provided each of them with a letter of apology from Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō, two million yen as atonement money, and three million yen for medical and welfare relief. South Korean NGOs and mass media, however, denounced the seven women as traitors to the Korean nation (Park, 2011). To stop any more former 'comfort women' from receiving atonement money, the Korean Council began raising money on their own. Since the Korean Council could not raise enough money to match the amount offered by the fund, however, they lobbied the South Korean government to provide monetary relief for former 'comfort women'. After Kim Dae Jung became president in February 1998, his government agreed to provide monetary relief worth three million yen for every former 'comfort woman'.[5] But Kim's government and the Korean Council barred the seven former 'comfort women' who had received Japanese atonement money from access to the South Korean monetary relief. Moreover, in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, former 'comfort women' and their supporters continued to hold their weekly rallies to demand genuine apologies accompanied by compensation from the Japanese government.

A Cultural-Pragmatic Analysis Of Japan's Apology

Thus during the historical period described above (1992−1998), the Japanese government's political apology was rejected by the majority of former 'comfort women' and their supporters in South Korea. Here, I argue that cultural pragmatics can explain this failure in terms of the six elements of political apology as a social performance.

Contradictory Collective Representations

First of all, 'historical facts' about 'comfort women' were highly contested. On the one hand, supporters of former 'comfort women' painted a black-and-white picture: all South Korean 'comfort women' had been coerced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military. In particular, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan claimed that the Japanese government had forcibly drafted Korean female volunteer corps into the military 'comfort women' system, with 200,000 Korean women forced into such work. On the other hand, Japanese historians were aware of different types of 'comfort stations' vis-à-vis different methods of recruitment (Ōnuma, 2007). Even the most sympathetic Japanese historians, including Yoshimi Yoshiaki who is a prominent expert on the wartime 'comfort-women' system, questioned the Korean Council's claim by pointing out that female corps and 'comfort women' had been recruited separately, recruiters had included Koreans, and the estimated number of Korean 'comfort women' was excessive (Yoshimi and Kawata, 1997). In fact, the Korean Council's claim was so problematic that even some prominent South Korean historians expressed skepticism (Park, 2011: 135–136; Soh, 2008: Chapter 3). Simply put, there was no shared collective representation about the past wrong at the most fundamental, cognitive level.

Moreover, the Japanese government and South Korean former 'comfort women' made completely different assumptions about compensability. The Japanese government insisted that all issues of compensation between Japan and South Korea had been resolved by the Compensation and Economic Cooperation Agreement that the two governments had signed upon normalization of their relations in 1965. This agreement authorized the Japanese government to substitute economic aid for compensation for damages that South Koreans had suffered from Japan's wartime atrocities and colonial rule. With this economic aid, the agreement stated that the 'problem concerning property, rights and interests of the two Contracting Parties and their nationals (including juridical persons) … is settled completely and finally'.[6] In contrast, South Korean former 'comfort women' and their supporters adopted the logic of human rights and argued that the Japanese government still had responsibility for compensating the victim individuals, independent of the prior intergovernmental compensation (Kimura, 2014).

These contradictory understandings and assumptions were exacerbated by the persistent dominance of nationalism in both Japan and South Korea. First of all, Japan's entire scheme for war-related compensation was predicated on the logic of nationalism: throughout the postwar period, the government limited compensation to Japanese citizens who had served in the military and their bereaved families as a way to honor and reward their sacrifices for the Japanese nation. For this reason, compensation had been denied to Japanese civilians who had suffered from the war, as well as to foreign

nationals, such as Koreans, who had served in the Japanese military but lost Japanese citizenship after the war (Tanaka et al., 1995). The government was therefore reluctant to provide former 'comfort women' with compensation because doing so could open the doors to compensation claims by a wide variety of foreign victims, such as foreign veterans and their bereaved families and forced laborers. Put another way, if the government granted compensation to former 'comfort women', it would undermine the nationalist commemoration of the Asia-Pacific War as a heroic act of self-defense. As a result, the Japanese government's script for a political apology took the form of the Asia Women's Fund that offered victim individuals 'atonement money' from Japanese citizens rather than 'compensation' from the government.

In turn, supporters of former 'comfort women' in South Korea seemed to be unwilling to give up their own nationalistic sentiments against Japan. The Korean Council President Yun Chung Ok, for example, denounced the seven former 'comfort women' who agreed to accept money from the Asian Women's Fund by stating, 'By receiving the money that does not accompany the admission of guilt, the victims admitted that they had volunteered to become prostitutes' (reprinted in Park, 2011: 108). As Shin Gi-Wook and his colleagues observed, the dominance of nationalism in Korea 'forces issues to be framed in binary opposition − victims versus aggressors − and leaves little room for a shared view of historical injustice' (Shin et al., 2007: 8). Such a binary opposition makes it difficult for the victim to meet the perpetrator halfway, thereby forestalling the possibility of reconciliation that is fundamentally a 'two-way street' requiring 'a willingness on the part of the victim to accept the apology and move on' (Cha, 2003: 58).

Finally, these disjunctions in Japanese and South Korean collective representations might have been compounded by cultural specificities in East Asia, where 'shame' rather than 'guilt' operates as a dominant idiom of feeling about the past (Kim and Schwartz, 2010). Since shame is connected to an actor's overall character, in contrast with guilt which is attached to a specific act (Petersen, 2014), this raises the stakes of political apology for both former 'comfort women' and the Japanese government. The victim individuals tend to demand total degradation of the perpetrator state's moral character, whereas the perpetrator state hesitates to apologize at all because no apology will likely be sufficient to amend the deficiency considered inherent in its moral character. The perpetrator state is thus almost guaranteed to lose face. Alongside this common cultural idiom of shame, cultural differences between Japan and South Korea might have played a role as well. While morality is considered distinct from law in Japan, they are seen as unified in South Korea: the Japanese side believes that it is valid to separate an apology in a moral sense from the legal issue of compensation, whereas the South Korean side believes that the moral and legal issues cannot be separated (Asaba et al., 2012: 44−50).

Thus, despite the emergence of forms of cosmopolitan memory (Levy and Sznaider, 2006), the dissemination of world culture (Lechner and Boli, 2005), and the institutionalization of 'regret' as a political-cultural idiom (Olick, 2007), no common collective representations existed in East Asia to coordinate interactions between the perpetrator state and the victim individuals. As a result, the former was unable to come up with a script for a political apology capable of satisfying the latter.

The Divided Actor

During the historical period under consideration, three prime ministers, including Miyazawa Kiichi and Murayama Tomiichi, apologized for the suffering of former 'comfort women' by acknowledging the wartime system of 'comfort women' as wrong, and by expressing their sorrow and regret when they visited South Korea for summit meetings. (And another prime minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō signed letters of apology to former 'comfort women' who decided to receive atonement money.) These prime ministers, however, could not effectively unify the Japanese government as a single actor capable of issuing an unequivocal apology. To begin with, Miyazawa was president of the LDP which had defended the nationalist commemoration of the Asia-Pacific War. Even though Miyazawa's cabinet secretary Kōno Yōhei issued a statement apologizing to former 'comfort women', this document was not officially approved by Miyazawa's cabinet as the government's position, and it was also repeatedly criticized by LDP members. In addition, while Murayama was non-LDP prime minister, the LDP was a stronger partner in his coalition government and prevented his JSP from providing government compensation for former 'comfort women'.

As Nick Smith pointed out, 'A consensus of membership apologising for the sake of victims provides the ideal motivation, but this will be a difficult standard to meet for large organisations with diverse membership' (2014: 48). Indeed, since apologies by prime ministers were frequently met with opposition and even 'backlashes' from conservative LDP members in cabinets (Lind, 2008), the Japanese government failed to achieve the status of unified actorhood; a precondition for an unequivocal political apology.

Divided Audience

Unlike the Japanese government, the South Korean audience was fairly unified. To be sure, the primary South Korean audience – former 'comfort women' − was divided into two groups: those who were willing to accept atonement money out of economic necessity and desire for psychological closure, among other reasons, and those who refused anything short of government compensation. However, both groups were heavily influenced by the secondary South Korean audience, comprised of women's rights advocates who were determined to make the Japanese government compensate former 'comfort women'. The Korean Council, in particular, tried to stop the first group of former 'comfort women' from receiving atonement money from the Asian Women's Fund (Park, 2011) and mobilized the second group to condemn the Japanese government. The Korean Council also dominated public discussions in South Korea by attacking researchers who questioned the council's claims (Soh, 2008). As a result, the majority of primary and secondary South Korean audiences came to adopt the Korean Council's claims: that 200,000 Korean female corps had been forcibly mobilized as 'comfort women', and an acceptable apology for this atrocious human rights violation must entail government compensation.

More or less the same claims were adopted by the international audience watching the Japanese government's actions. The issue of 'comfort women' was attracting worldwide

attention since it came to be increasingly framed as a human rights violation in conjunction with violence committed against women during the Yugoslavian Wars and civil wars in Rwanda, Cambodia, and East Timor the 1990s (Tsutsui, 2006). In January 1996, for example, United Nations Special Rapporteur Radhika Coomaraswamy submitted an addendum report on 'comfort women' to the Commission on Human Rights. In her report, Coomaraswamy recommended that the Japanese government should acknowledge, apologize to, and compensate former 'comfort women' as well as punish those who had been involved in the management of 'comfort stations'.[7] In June 1998, another Special Rapporteur, Gay McDougall, submitted a report entitled 'Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slavery-like Practices during Armed Conflict' to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at the Commission on Human Rights. In the appendix of her report, McDougall argued that the Japanese government should do more than simply set up the Asian Women's Fund to atone for having forced 'over 200,000 women into sexual slavery in rape centres throughout Asia'.[8]

However, the Japanese audience – the constituency of the Japanese government – was polarized by two opposing groups. The first group was aligned with the South Korean and international audience.[9] Most notably, Japanese women's NGOs organized an international symposium in Tokyo in 1997 by inviting 40 guests from 20 different countries. After the symposium, participants established the Violence Against Women in War Network Japan, and began advocacy activities to support groups of female victims around the world, including former 'comfort women'. In contrast, the second group, comprised of nationalist intellectuals, activists, and politicians, completely rejected South Korean and international claims by exaggerating their evidential problems. Coomaraswamy's report, for example, cited Yoshida Seiji's 1983 book *My War Crimes: The Forced Draft of Koreans*, wherein Yoshida, a former soldier, made up a story of how he had forcibly taken Korean women from Cheju Island in 1943, even though Japanese historians agreed that Yoshida's book was not reliable enough to be used as historical evidence (Yoshimi and Kawata, 1997: 26–27). Similar evidentiary problems were found in McDougall's report, in which her estimate of the number of 'comfort women' who had died during the Asia-Pacific War relied on an unfounded story told by a member of the LDP in 1965 (Ōnuma, 2007: 149–150). Japanese nationalists seized on these problematic claims to discredit the issue of 'comfort women' entirely as a fabrication (Fujioka, 2000). Nakagawa Shōichi, Abe Shinzō, and other relatively young LDP members also established the Association of Young Diet Members for Examining Japan's Future and History Education in February 1997 to remove from schools 'historically inaccurate, anti-Japanese textbooks' containing descriptions of the wartime 'comfort-women' system (Nihon no Zento to Rekishi Kyōiku wo Kangaeru Wakate Giin no Kai, 1997: 3).

As a result, the Japanese government's apology in the form of the Asian Women's Fund was denounced from two sides. On the one hand, former 'comfort women' and their South Korean, Japanese, and international supporters rejected the government's apology as inadequate because it was not accompanied by compensation. On the other hand, Japanese nationalists criticized the government for giving in to pressures from former 'comfort women' and their supporters, even when there was nothing to apologize for. Contradictory reactions from the two opposing audiences then bounced off each

other in the public sphere, creating unexpected dynamics that damaged the relationship that the perpetrator state's apology originally intended to repair.

Compromised Means of Symbolic Production

Government compensation was not at the heart of the controversy because money was important for former 'comfort women', but because the primary function of compensation is symbolic, to reinforce the sincerity of apology that the perpetrator tries to communicate to the victim (Minow, 1998). Take, for example, Avi Primor, an Israeli diplomat who was involved in the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future fund that the German government set up to financially compensate former forced laborers and other victims of Nazi Germany. He recognized that the amount of compensation that the Fund can offer to the victims is very limited; for example, approximately five to six thousand US dollars for someone who worked as a forced laborer for five years. But he argued that 'this is really not about financial compensation but about symbolic recognition – that's the crucial thing' (reprinted in Funabashi, 2001: 186–187).

For practical purposes, the Japanese government did offer compensation. In addition to 'atonement money' delivered through the Asian Women's Fund, the government allocated from its budget three million yen for each former 'comfort woman' in South Korea to cover her medical and welfare expenses. The government, however, refused to call it 'compensation' by continuing to insist that all issues of compensation had been resolved upon the 1965 normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea. By so doing, the government obscured the causal relationship between its past wrongdoing and its present actions toward former 'comfort women'. Perhaps more problematic was the policy of the Asian Women's Fund to provide a former 'comfort woman' with a letter of apology only if she first agreed to accept atonement money: this policy practically held hostage to money the symbolic recognition of human dignity.

In short, the Japanese government rendered ineffective its means of symbolic production by compromising the symbolic function of monetary relief for former 'comfort women'. As Margaret Walker pointed out, since 'all reparations are seen by victims as communicative gestures', if 'the reparative communication misfires or is poorly executed … the victims may be insulted, outraged, or bitterly disappointed' (2013: 212). This is exactly how former 'comfort women' and their supporters reacted to the Asian Women's Fund and they continue to protest against the Japanese government.

Mismanagement of Mise-en-Scène

In addition to compromising the means of symbolic production, the Japanese government poorly managed mise-en-scène in at least two ways. First of all, none of the prime ministers delivered their apologies in person, despite repeated requests for face-to-face meetings from former 'comfort women' and their supporters. Put another way, the prime ministers' performances failed to achieve their desired dramatic effect, to anthropomorphize the perpetrator state and to offer an affectively satisfying apology that the victim individuals wanted.

Second, and more importantly, the Japanese government did not communicate with former 'comfort women' prior to its public performance. Since a political apology by definition has to be performed in public, it can be successfully completed only when the victim accepts it in public. For this reason, the actor needs 'backstage' preparation, so to speak, to communicate with their audiences prior to a performance, to learn about what they expect, and calibrate the staging accordingly. Such backstage preparation, however, was severely lacking. The Japanese government, for example, was unwilling to collect information on how former 'comfort women' and their supporters would react to the Asian Women's Fund. As Totsuka Esturō, a lawyer who provided legal support for former 'comfort women', recounted:

> There was no prior, preliminary talk between the Japanese government and victims. The Japanese government unilaterally decided on a solution … and asked victims to accept it … The government did not know how the victims would react because it had failed to listen to the victims carefully. (reprinted in Shimizu and Yamashita, 2012: 133, 181)

Without careful mise-en-scène, it is not surprising that many former 'comfort women' and their supporters reacted negatively to the Asian Women's Fund.

In contrast, there is some evidence that the Japanese government engaged in backstage communication with the South Korean government in the early 1990s. According to the 'Report on the History of Interactions between Japan and South Korea over the Issue of "Comfort Women"' published in June 2014, the two governments regularly communicated with each other in the process of drafting the 1993 Kōno Statement.[10] The South Korean government, for example, reportedly told the Japanese government that it would not demand compensation if the Japanese side issued an apology and investigated historical facts about 'comfort women'. But later, the South Korean government also expressed concerns about the Asian Women's Fund engaging in activities in South Korea when many NGOs were opposed to it. This indicates that even though backstage communication occurred at the governmental level, the Japanese government often proceeded to perform an apology before it secured full cooperation from the South Korean government.

Hostile Social and Political Power

Finally, the poorly managed mise-en-scène was compounded by hostile social power. As Alexander observed, in a complex and pluralized society, 'the means of recording and distributing social dramas have been distributed more widely, media interpretation has become more subject to disputation, and performative success more contingent' (2004a: 558). In fact, hostile reactions from both Japanese and South Korean mass media undermined the Japanese government's apology. Generally speaking, political apologies are highly mediated by television, radio, and other forms of mass communication, because media reporters and commentators other than victims are part of the audience (Harris et al., 2006). Particularly in the transnational context, mass media play a crucial role in influencing audiences' perceptions, because the majority of victims and their supporters are likely to hear the perpetrator state's apology through media coverage (Seaton, 2007).

To begin with, Japanese newspapers, such as *Asahi Shimbun*, reported the issue of 'comfort women' by sacrificing accuracy for sensationalism (Ōnuma, 2007). For example, when Murayama's government was preparing the Asian Women's Fund in August 1994, *Asahi Shimbun* reported that the government planned to provide former 'comfort women' with one-time 'sympathy money (mimaikin)' collected from Japanese citizens, as well as publishing reactions from supporters of former 'comfort women' criticizing the government for trying to evade its responsibility.[11] According to Wada (2012), one of the promoters of the Asian Women's Fund, this news report downplayed the extent of intended 'atonement' (rather than 'sympathy') within Murayama's government, undermined the ongoing efforts by some cabinet members to push for government compensation, and created distrust between the government and former 'comfort women' and their supporters. In South Korea, too, mass media rarely presented information and interpretations that would contradict the stereotype of an unapologetic Japan (Park, 2011; Soh, 2008).

After all, it was not only mass media that exercised social power hostile to the Japanese government's apology, but also the LDP, the most dominant political party in Japan, which wielded its power to prevent the government from offering a decisive political apology. During much of the postwar period, the LDP collaborated with the Yasukuni Shrine and the Japan Bereaved Families Association to commemorate the war as a heroic act of self-defense against the 'West', and worshiped soldiers who had scarified their lives for the nation (Tanaka et al., 1995). In recent years, the party also cooperated with the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform to downplay Japan's past wrongs and emphasize patriotism in history education. Given the persistence of the LDP's political power and nationalist commemoration, the Japanese government, even under the socialist Prime Minister Murayama, was unable to act as a unified actor, deploy the adequate means of symbolic production, and effectively manage the mise-en-scène of a political apology.

Conclusion and Implications

In light of this cultural-pragmatic analysis, I argue that the Japanese government's political apology to former 'comfort women' failed because each of the six elements of social performance was insufficiently realized due to the historical, cultural, and political contexts specific to Japan and South Korea: Japanese and South Korean collective representations of 'comfort women' were significantly different and even contradictory; the Japanese government was unable to act as a unified actor capable of offering an unequivocal apology; the audiences in South Korea and Japan were polarized; the means of symbolic production was not effectively mobilized to endow monetary relief with a proper symbolic function; mise-en-scène was poorly managed and failed to elicit desired responses from the audiences; and the LDP's political power compromised the government's apology, while mass media's social power discredited the compromised apology. Thus, instead of relying on a prescribed 'checklist' for successful political apology, cultural pragmatics has enabled a systematic empirical analysis of how the larger contexts forestalled constructive interactions between the perpetrator state and the victim individuals over the past wrongs.

But, at the same time, the cultural pragmatics model of political apology also suggests that the 'apology drama' between Japan and South Korea is not over yet, because the

'instance of uttering an apology is in many ways the beginning of a process rather than the end' (Smith, 2014: 41). In fact, in December 2011, the Korean Council erected a statue of a '13-year-old Comfort Woman' as a 'symbol of sadness and anger' in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.[12] When the Japanese government requested the statue be removed, South Korea's Foreign Ministry rejected the request by stating, 'the statue embodies the victims' wish for Japan's responsible action and restoration of their dignity', and 'Japan needs to make an effort on the issue of comfort women'.[13] More recently, in August 2014, South Korean President Park Geun Hye also demanded that the Japanese government should take action to 'fulfill the wishes of former comfort women while they are still alive'.[14]

Here the ongoing apology drama is a performative act par excellence, because it aims to establish new relations, rather than repair old ones, between Japan and South Korea as members of the same political community that is yet to come into existence (cf. Schaap, 2005). Accordingly, cultural-pragmatic analysis will have to be re-employed to access the drama's eventual failure or success. Moreover, I argue that the cultural pragmatics of political apology in itself is 'performative' (Law, 2008) because social scientists who offer empirical observations are part and parcel of the apology drama: they cannot but provide policy-makers, NGOs, and concerned citizens with languages and rationales for justifying their positions. In this regard, even though cultural pragmatics is not normative in the political-philosophical sense, it is fundamentally performative in the sense of influencing the terms of successful apology between the perpetrator state and the victim individual.

In conclusion, I suggest that the cultural pragmatics model of political apology also has the potential to overcome the dyadic thinking characteristic of existing research on apology across disciplines. When past conflicts, such as the Asia-Pacific War, involved multiple countries, apology cannot simply be dyadic because identities of some parties can be doubled. The majority of Japanese citizens, for example, see Japan as the victim as well as the perpetrator because of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the fire-bombings of other cities, among other atrocities that the Allied Powers committed against Japanese civilians (Orr, 2001; Park, 2011). In this sense, East Asia's history problem is transnational to the extent that the United States too is implicated in it (Dudden, 2008; Kim and Schwartz, 2010). Here, the cultural pragmatics of political apology can help examine multiple, intertwined dyadic interactions as a single apology drama on the larger scale. With such conceptual extension, the cultural-pragmatic approach may be able to fully clarify the tasks necessary for Japan, South Korea, and other relevant countries to complete a successful political apology as a social performance and thereby attain reconciliation.

Acknowledgements

I thank the anonymous reviewers, Kim Greenwell, Seiko Mimaki, and Timothy Yang for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

Funding

This research was partly supported by the Social Science Research Council–Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Fellowship, and institutional affiliation with the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo during 2011−2012, as well as by the Postdoctoral Fellowship in the

Program on US–Japan Relations at Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University during 2013−2014.

Notes

1. ‘Jūgun Ianfu Mondai “Munega Tsumaru Omoi” Miyazawa Shushō Shinsōkyūmei wo Yakusoku’. *Asahi Shimbun Evening Edition*, page 1, 17 January 1992.
2. In total, the Japanese government found more than 260 documents related to ‘comfort women’. Available at: http://www.awf.or.jp/6/document.html (accessed 10 January 2014).
3. ‘Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono’s Statement’ is archived at the Digital Museum. Available at: http://www.awf.or.jp/2/survey.html (accessed 10 January 2014).
4. ‘Announcement of the Purpose and Activities of the “Fund”’, 14 June 1995, is archived at the Digital Museum. Available at: http://www.awf.or.jp/6/statement-07.html (accessed 10 January 2014).
5. For details of the fund’s activities in South Korea, see ‘Projects by Country or Region: South Korea’ in the Digital Museum. Available at: http://www.awf.or.jp/3/korea.html (accessed 10 January 2014).
6. See ‘Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea’. Available at: http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPKR/19650622.T9E.html (accessed 10 January 2012).
7. The ‘Addendum Report on the Mission to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery in Wartime’ 4 January 1996, is archived at the Digital Museum. Available at: http://www.awf.or.jp/4/un-01.html (accessed 1 March 2014).
8. See ‘Contemporary Forms of Slavery’, 22 June 1998, United Nations Economic and Social Council. Available at: http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/fb00da486703f751c12565a90059a227/3d25270b5fa3ea998025665f0032f220?OpenDocument (accessed 1 March 2014).
9. See ‘Introduction of VAWW-NET Japan’, Violence Against Women in War Japan Network. Available at: http://www1.jca.apc.org/vaww-net-japan/aboutus/index.html (accessed 1 March 2014).
10. Prime Minister’s Office, 20 June 2014, ‘Ianfu Mondai wo meguru Nikkankan no Yaritori no Keii’. Available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/kakugikettei/2014/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/06/20/20140620houkokusho_2.pdf (accessed 1 July 2014).
11. ‘Moto Jūgun Ianfu eno Seifu no “Mimaikin” Kōsō Kankeisha no Hyōka Wareru’. *Asahi Shimbun*, page 27, 19 August 1994.
12. ‘Chūkan Nihontaishikan maeni “13-sai no Ianfushōjo” no Heiwa no Hi’. *JoongAng Ilbo*, 15 December 2011.
13. ‘Nihontaishkan mae Ianfurensōzō Seifu Tekkyo wo Yousei’. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, page 4, 15 December 2011.
14. ‘Park Daitōryō Ianfu ni Genkyū Miraishikō “Nihon Ketsudan wo” “Kōfukusetsu” Enzetsu’. *Asahi Shimbun Evening Edition*, page 2, 15 August 2014.

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